



What a Way to End a Detachment!

By LCdr. Vince Lowell,
VR-48

It was another routine detachment to Sigonella, Sicily, until, with only a week to go, everyone decided we should do something fun as a group. NASCAR season was just around the corner, so the go-kart track was our obvious choice.

Going against my better judgment, I crumbled under the peer pressure. I figured somebody would get hurt because of a lack of safety concerns in foreign countries. What I didn't know was that I would be the victim.

The quarter-mile track had three turns and a long straightaway. The karts were 150 cc models, with top speeds of 30 mph. They had exposed wheels and no roll cages. At least the management insisted on one safety rule: Everyone had to wear a helmet.

I knew trouble lay ahead because we couldn't even get through a practice lap without someone wrecking. The first race was uneventful—only a couple of bruised egos from not winning. The second race was a little more exciting. Even though the odds were against it, my friends tried going three wide around a hairpin turn. One kart overturned, but no one was injured badly.

Now it was my turn to race. Determined not to let anyone beat me, I had studied the first couple of races and had selected one of the faster karts on the track. All my concerns for safety flew out the window when the green flag was dropped.

It felt great leading the first couple of laps. Then, all of a sudden, a pilot from my aircrew appeared out of nowhere and passed me on the straightaway. With only two laps to go, I knew I'd have to make my move soon to earn bragging rights for the remainder of the detachment. My opportunity came at turn 3 when he slowed just a bit.

I don't remember much after that. They told me our tires collided, and my kart flew 3 feet off the ground. I landed on my right shoulder, with the full weight of the kart on top of me. The end result: I lost the race, broke my shoulder, lost the use of my predominant arm, and received a down chit for the rest of the detachment—all for the sake of having fun.

The moral of this story is simple: Use ORM, and trust your intuition. If it looks dangerous, it probably is. Go sightseeing instead. ■